

SEPTEMBER 16, 1982

As August dragged on into September in the Shortgrass Country, the skies have stayed clear; the winds have blown barely enough to keep the stock in windmill water.

In the evenings, coming home from the ranch, the dust refuses to settle behind my pickup. Brown and grey streamers of powder float above the low spots like a fog that has yet to find a landing spot. Right on into the night, sheep and cows trail into the waterings. It's too early to complain of the dryness or the stillness; nevertheless, the calendar seems to be clicking off the days far too fast to support so much dry weather before winter.

As in any other weather vigil, we haven't had the leisure to do much worrying. Just last night a guy on the telephone asked if I regretted having the spring wool unsold. After I told him that I didn't realize how long it'd been since I'd even thought of the wool business.

The great advantage of owning hollow horns and woolies is the continuous amount of distraction they offer the owner. I wouldn't dare own a commodity as risky as wool without having a bunch of old ewes, too. In a month after we'd sheared, the lamb market had broke enough to absorb the wool checks had there been any such thing.

I don't recall feeling bad over the wool situation for a whole week. The outbreak of coyotes and the scourge of sheep committing suicide eating prickly pear was a bit painful. But I don't remember being disturbed about the wool or the wolves until the peso was devalued in Mexico and ewes began to fall in price so fast that live sheep were nearly on par with dead ones.

The summer surely wasn't spent moping over wool. I am at a loss to give the sequence of events for the season. However, I think the soured wool and lamb market gave us the leverage we needed down at the banks to keep our loans active. It might be a good idea for cattlemen to copy the woolie game. When you think of it from the view of a jugkeeper, it's unlikely that a bank is going to foreclose on a herd of sheep that are about 12 inches from dying from either the fangs of a wolf or about that many days off perishing from eating too much cactus.

Something that does bother me is the way all the politicians are trying to shore up the economy before the elections in November. At least 4900 times, the press has screamed how bad everything was on the Mexican border and how awful it was on the turn-rows of the farming country.

Not once has there been any talk of coming to our rescue. As hard as the worthies are clamoring for votes, if they don't want our support this time then I think we are really sunk for good.

I am going to check by the wool warehouse one of these days to see what's happened to the market. Before long the state will want an agriculture census. For sure, they'll be curious to know how much wool was held over. I wonder what else I've overlooked.

Who knows I may be part of a missing heir episode and not even be aware of my new wealth.